

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1231

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TAGS: SENV, PO, SP, OECD

SUBJ: PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND POLLUTION

1. PORTUGUESE DELEGATION TO MID-NOVEMBER MEETING OF OECD COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENT NOVEMBER 15 ON RETURN TO LISBON. STATEMENT REFERRED TO SPANISH DIS-INTEREST IN COOPERATING WITH PORTUGAL ON PROBLEM OF POLLUTION OF RIVERS RISING IN SPAIN AND FLOWING THROUGH PORTUGAL; SPANISH ATTITUDE, ACCORDING TO PORTUGUESE, HAD NO VALID BASIS.

2. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, CORREIA DA CUNHA, HEAD OF PORTUGUESE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION, STATED THAT SPANISH POSITIONS AT OECD MEETING WERE MARKED BY INTRANSIGENCE, REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF POLLUTION ORIGINATING WITHIN ONE COUNTRY BUT AFFECTING OTHERS, CLAIMS THAT BUREAUCRATIC DIFFICULTIES IN
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SPAIN COULD NOT BE SURMOUNTED IN ORDER ALLOW NATIONALS OF

OTHER COUNTRIES RIGHT TO PURSUE POLLUTION RELATED DAMAGE CLAIMS IN SPANISH COURTS, AND DOGMATIC RESISTANCE AGAINST INFRINGEMENTS ON SPANISH "SOVEREIGN RIGHTS." CORREIA DA CUNHA ADDED THAT SPAIN STOOD ALONE AT MEETING, WITH EVEN FRENCH GENERALLY ON SAME SIDE AS REST OF MEMBERS. FINAL COMMUNIQUE INDICATED COMMON AGREEMENT ON PROBLEMS DISCUSSED, BUT SPANISH RESERVATIONS WERE REFERRED TO IN ANNEXES.

3. CORREIA DA CUNHA NOTED THAT PROBLEM OF TRANS-FRONTIER POLLUTION FROM SPAIN AFFECTS BUT ONE OTHER COUNTRY -- PORTUGAL. (HE DISCOUNTED POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR FRANCE RESULTING FROM SPANISH ORIGINATING POLLUTANTS ENTERING BAY OF BISCAY OR MEDITERRANEAN.) SPAIN'S ATTITUDE, HE FEELS, IS POLITICALLY RELATED; IT HAS DEFINITELY HARDENED SINCE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION.

4. MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR PORTUGUESE INVOLVES RIVER TAGUS. ASIDE FROM MORE COMMON FORMS OF RIVER POLLUTION, TAGUS (AND LISBON METROPOLITAN REGION) ARE FACED WITH THREAT OF RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION FROM SPANISH NUCLEAR INSTALLATION AT TALAVERA DE LA REINA. CORREIA DA CUNHA EMPHASIZED THAT EVEN MINOR ACCIDENT THERE, IF CONTAMINATION ALLOWED ENTER TAGUS, COULD HAVE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR LISBON.

5. COMMENT: GOP HAS NOT EXPRESSED THESE CONCERNS PUBLICLY, A FACT ATTRIBUTABLE TO PORTUGAL'S OVERALL CONCERN AT MAINTAINING CORRECT RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOR. EVEN RELATIVELY MILD CRITICISM REFERRED TO IN PARA 1 PROVOKED MINI-DEMONSTRATION BY UNIV LISBON STUDENTS, ALLEGEDLY PROTESTING AGAINST SPANISH POLLUTION. (CORREIA DA CUNHA DISCOUNTED POSSIBLE PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL SENTIMENT OF STUDENTS, FEELING THIS MERELY DEMONSTRATED THEIR ANTI-SPANISH, ANTI-"FASCIST" BIAS.) WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ANY VIEWS WHICH EMBASSY MADRID MAY HAVE ON THIS SUBJECT.

POST

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